

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 121

SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1839

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, OTRA, SN

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH ACTING PRIME MINISTER/MINISTER OF DEFENCE

SUMMARY: DURING A DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE GROUP 14 AND DR. GOH KENG SWEE, ACTING PRIME MINISTER/MINISTER OF DEFENCE ON 17 APRIL 1978, DR. GOH INDICATED SINGAPORE'S SATISFACTION IN THE US EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN A MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION. HE SPECIFICALLY CITED VISITS BY UNITS OF THE SEVENTH FLEET AS IMPORTANT TO THE MAINTENANCE OF STABILITY IN THE AREA, AND IN PROVIDING "CONFIDENCE" TO SINGAPORE'S INVESTORS. CONCERNING COOPERATION WITHIN ASEAN, HE STATED THAT BOTH MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE DO NOT FEEL A FORMAL ARRANGEMENT IS NECESSARY. THE THAIS ARE VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT FORMALIZING COOPERATION BECAUSE OF THE POTENTIAL HOSTILE REACTION OF ITS INDO-CHINA NEIGHBORS WHILE THE PHILIPPINES, WITH STRONG TIES WITH THE US AND OTHER INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, ARE NOT ESPECIALLY DEPENDENT UPON ASEAN TIES. INDONESIA ON THE OTHER HAND IS VERY EAGER ABOUT FORMALIZING ASEAN TIES. HE MENTIONED SINGAPORE'S INTEREST IN KRILL FROM ANTARTICA FOR USE AS A FOOD SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MILITARY BUT COMPLAINED THAT THE ONLY PROCESSOR OF KRILL, THE SOVIETS, CHARGE TOO MUCH FOR THEIR PRODUCT. DR. GOH INQUIRED ABOUT THE COMPOSITION OF ATTENDEES AT SENIOR SERVICE SCHOOLS SUCH AS THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE AND ASKED WHETHER FOREIGN STUDENTS ARE ACCEPTED.

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HE WAS TOLD THAT ATTENDEES ARE DRAWN FROM THE VARIOUS SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND THAT WHILE NO FOREIGN STUDENTS ARE CURRENTLY ACCEPTED AT THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE; HOWEVER, THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE RECENTLY OPENED A FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS ON SELECTIVE BASIS. END OF SUMMARY.

1. ON 17 APRIL, FOUR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE GROUP 14 ACCOMPANIED BY THE ARMA AND MYSELF, PAID A CALL ON DR. GOH KENG SWEE, ACTING PRIME MINISTER/MINISTER OF DEFENCE. MR. BERNARD CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR MINDEF AND A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE WERE ALSO PRESENT. IN RESPONDING TO A QUESTION OF HOW DOES SINGAPORE VIEW US MILITARY EFFORTS IN THE AREA, DR. GOH INDICATED THAT SINGAPORE WAS VERY SATISFIED WITH PRESENT US EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN PRESENCE IN THE AREA. HE STATED THAT SINGAPORE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE US EFFORTS IN THE REGION AND THE INDIAN OCEAN AND CITED VISITS BY UNITS OF THE SEVENTH FLEET AS BOTH USEFUL AND IMPORTANT TO THE MAINTENANCE OF STABILITY WITHIN THE REGION. HE STATED THAT THIS PROVIDED "CONFIDENCE" TO SINGAPORE'S INVESTORS.

2. QUERIED ABOUT HIS VIEWS CONCERNING COOPERATION WITHIN ASEAN, DR. GOH STATED THAT BOTH MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE DO NOT FEEL A FORMAL ARRANGEMENT FOR COOPERATION IS NECESSARY. IN HIS VIEW THE THAIS ARE VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT FORMALIZING ASEAN COOPERATION BECAUSE OF THE POTENTIAL HOSTILE REACTION OF ITS INDO-CHINA NEIGHBORS. THE PHILIPPINES, WITH STRONG TIES. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE COOPERATION (INCLUDING POLITICAL COOPERATION) DR. GOH VOICED THE VIEW THAT A CERTAIN DEGREE OF COMPLEMENTATION WAS NECESSARY. A SKILLED CIVIL SERVICE, SUCH AS THE ONE SINGAPORE FORTUNATELY HAS HAD, IS CRITICAL TO ASEAN COOPERATION. NATIONAL DIFFERENCES  
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IN THE LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE COULD MAKE COOPERATION DIFFICULT.

3. ON THE SUBJECT OF COOPERATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION, DR. GOH CONFIRMED THE WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT ONLY NON-COMBATANT SOVIET SHIPS ARE PRESENTLY BEING REPAIRED IN SINGAPORE. IN TALKING ABOUT GOS-USSR FISHERIES COOPERATION, HE MENTIONED SINGAPORE'S INTEREST IN ANTARTIC KRILL, PLANKTONIC CRUSTACEANS RICH IN PROTEIN, WHICH GOS IS INTERESTED IN AS A FOOD SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MILITARY AND WHICH, HE SAID, "COULD BE HAD FOR THE TAKING". HE COMPLAINED THAT THE SOVIETS WHO ARE THE ONLY KNOWN PROCESSORS OF KRILL, CHARGED TOO MUCH FOR THEIR PRODUCT -- \$1.25 PER KILO, FOR WHICH THE GOS COULD PURCHASE AN EQUAL AMOUNT OF SHRIMP.

4. IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE, DR. GOH WAS INFORMED THAT STUDENTS WERE SELECTED FROM ALL THE MILITARY SERVICES AND FROM SEVERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. HE WAS ALSO INFORMED THAT THERE ARE NO FOREIGN STUDENTS AT THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE BUT THAT THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE IS TRYING OUT A PROGRAM OF FOREIGN STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS ON A SMALL AND SELECTIVE BASIS.

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